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THE PURITAN SPIRIT:

BY

CHARLES WELLINGTON STONE.

AN ORATION

DELIVERED IN

TEMPLETON, MASS.,

JULY 4, 1876.



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CHARLES WELLINGTON STONE.

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THE CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION.

By vote of the town of Templeton, April 3, 1876, an appropriation was made for celebrating the centennial anniversary of American Independence. To carry this into effect, a Committee was chosen, consisting of

Mr. FRANCIS LELAND ;
Capt. CHARLES W. DAVIS ;
Mr. CHARLES A. PERLEY ;
Rev. EDWIN G. ADAMS ;
Mr. THOMAS T. GREENWOOD ;
Mr. ELISHA C. FARNSWORTH ;
Mr. LUCIEN N. HADLEY.

At sunrise, noon, and sunset, on the fourth of July, the bells were rung and national salutes were fired. A procession was formed, consisting of the East Templeton Cornet Band, a company of "Red-coats" from East Templeton, the officials of the day, the clergy and present and past town officers, the schools of the town, a company of "Continental" from Otter River, citizens, and a company of "Minute-men" from the Centre. The procession marched to a bower erected for the occasion on the Common, and there the exercises of the forenoon were held. The President of the Day was Mr.

Francis Leland: the Marshal of the Day was Col. George P. Hawkes: prayer was offered by Rev. Charles A. White: the Declaration of Independence was read by Mr. Percival Blodgett: the Orator of the Day was Mr. Charles W. Stone: music by a chorus and by the children of the public schools was directed by Capt. Charles W. Davis. A free collation prepared by the ladies of the town was served in the bower, after which addresses were made by Rev. Edwin G. Adams, Rev. L. Payson Broad, Hon. Giles H. Whitney of Winchendon, Hon. Jason Goulding of Phillipston, and Capt. V. P. Parkhurst. In the afternoon a company from Baldwinville in costume represented the exploits of a band of Indian warriors. In the early evening a concert was given in the church of the First Parish. After dark there was a fine exhibition of fireworks. Flags were displayed on the Common and the houses were generally decorated. About two thousand people were present during the day, and the utmost good order prevailed throughout.

On the following Sunday, July 9th, a centennial union religious service was held at the church of the First Parish, by five congregations of the town with their respective ministers and choirs, with the following order of exercises;

ANTHEM: "Blessed be the name of the Lord."

INVOCATION;

By Rev. L. P. BROAD, of the Congregational Church, Baldwinville.

READING OF SCRIPTURE:

By Rev. F. S. BACON, of the Baptist Church.

HYMN : *Te Deum.*

“O God, we praise thee and confess.”

PRAYER ;

By Rev. E. G. ADAMS, of the First Congregational Church.

HYMN : “ My country, 'tis of thee.”

SERMON ;

By Rev. R. W. HARLOW, of the Methodist Church.

HYMN : “ Let children hear the mighty deeds.”

ADDRESS ;

By Rev. E. G. ADAMS.

ADDRESS ;

By Rev. L. P. BROAD.

ADDRESS AND PRAYER ;

By Rev. G. BUSHNELL, formerly pastor of the Universalist Church.

Singing of “ The Star-Spangled Banner ” by the chorus, under the direction of Capt. C. W. DAVIS.

BENEDICTION ;

By Rev. R. W. HARLOW.



ORATION.

CHILDREN, LADIES, GENTLEMEN; FELLOW CITIZENS OF
MY NATIVE TOWN;—

I am deeply moved now, as I have been these past weeks, by the thought of holding such a position as this; for to stand here as I do today, to represent the town of Templeton on the day our country is a hundred years old, is not only the greatest honor that has ever come to me, but the greatest honor life can bring.

While I can never call any place but this my real home, I have yet lived away from here long enough to relieve any opinion I may have of Templeton from the suspicion of coming from local prejudice; and I have perhaps known communities enough to be able to form a reasonably correct estimate of this one. And it is borne in upon me more and more as the years go by that this might be taken for the typical, the representative New England town. What should such a town be? A town of character; a town of public spirit; a town free from the boyishness that characterizes so many villages of a later growth; a town in earnest. Such a town our Templeton has always been.

In these centennial days, when all our minds are turned to the events of a hundred years ago, we find in them nothing which is new or unfamiliar. From our earliest years these stories of our past have been to us as household words. But not one among them all comes to us like a twice told tale. There is a freshness about them that is never lost. We never tire of hearing them. Whence comes this undying charm? What is there in the fact that a body of men charged three times up a hill, and the third time drove its occupants from the summit, that should make it so interesting to us when told or read for the hundredth time? It is more than the feeling always roused by the contemplation of what is far in the past; the feeling that invests all things of a bygone day, however prosaic and realistic at the time, with an interest always poetic, and bordering on the romantic. It is this. The spirit that animated one side of those combatants was such as to keep these memories ever green. They cannot die.

Our country has passed through so much that the deeds we are commemorating seem far removed; but it is easy to feel what a little space has been occupied in the story of our world by these great events. When we think of the ages for which life has existed on this Earth, our imagination almost fails us. When we come to reflect upon the nature of time, we are brought face to face with conceptions so stupendous that many thinkers seem to wish to shun them by exclaiming that time is only an idea.

It is really not a long time since America's independence was declared: it is not long from that day we celebrate back to the landing of the Pilgrims on Plymouth Rock: it is not long to the date when Englishmen were recognized in Magna Charta as freemen nor from then to the time when the Anglo-Saxons moved to England from northern Germany; nor from then to the obscure days when the remotest of our known ancestors ceased to roam the Persian highlands. We cannot pause there. Those nomadic tribes had many of the ruder arts of life; and back we must go in our thoughts to the impenetrable ages when human life was wholly savage; back till we come to life not human but animal; backward through lower and lower forms till all existing life is that of plants; backward till the land has not appeared on the face of the Earth. Shut our eyes; and our globe is seen one waste of clouds and green waters, rolling onward in silent majesty; bearing in itself the seeds of its glorious future. But we cannot stop even there. Backward and backward we must think, till we can picture the Earth as a round fluid mass of immense extent; farther and farther till it has no existence of its own, but forms part of an almost boundless cloud of gas. Even this we find to be but as a dot in infinite space; and the mind sinks, faint in the endeavor to fathom infinitude.

We can trace the working of the eternal laws by which our planet has been evolved; by which life has been developed, from lowest forms to ever higher ones;

by which brutes have been raised to savages and savages to men. But what is it that has brought man from the repulsive barbarism of past ages to his present high estate? We can call it immutable law if we will; but what is this immutable law? It is that all man's advancement must come in one way; and that is through Conscious Human Effort.

All progress, all virtue, is some form of self-denial; all degeneration, all sin, some form of self-indulgence; and for all that mankind is today we are indebted to the exertions, the sacrifices, the self-denial in some form, of those who have gone before us. Our present state is the resultant of the inclinations of the natural man and of the self-denial of our predecessors which has set those inclinations aside.

In all ages of history there have not been wanting individuals, communities, even nations, that have possessed this spirit of resistance to wrong and self-indulgence in every form, in obedience to the promptings of what is unseen, and for the sake of those who were to come after them; but the spirit has never taken forms so high, so broad, and so lasting, as in the Anglo-Saxon race; and never so much so as in that part of our race from which came the New England Puritans.

This it is which in its broadest sense I am pleased to call The Puritan Spirit.

One of the most moving pictures that has come down to us from our colonial period is that of the aged Bradstreet, called by the electors of Massachusetts Bay to

the Governor's Chair. The venerable form which meets our mind's eye is that of one standing alone in his day and generation. Those who had held the place before him, Dudley, Bellingham, and Leverett, with Winthrop and Endicott, were sleeping in their graves. Of those who had laid the foundations of our state and our nation, he alone was left. His solitary figure, with the hoary hair and the snow-white beard, is the vanishing point of the first generation of New Englanders. Men called him the last of the Puritans; and when he was gathered, we can hardly say unto his fathers, but unto his brethren, they said The last of the Puritans is gone.

But Bradstreet was not the last of the Puritans; and the Puritan Spirit did not die with him. It lived after him; lives still; and will live. All that passed away with America's first generation, that race of men who seemed as of granite, was the result of the circumstances that bound them. Their austerity was not the fruit of the Spirit, but the product of the hard stern destiny they had to face. And when the austerity could go, and a milder age come in, the Spirit was not extinguished but only broadened by the change. It was the form and not the substance that dropped away.

Hutchinson was deceived, and those with him. He thought the Puritan Spirit was slumbering in the graves of Bradstreet and his brethren; but in the years which culminated in the Revolution he found it none the less inflexible for not having constantly obtruded itself. The smoothing of its sharp and rugged outlines had not

destroyed it, but had given it new possibilities. The Puritan Spirit has more forms than one. It breathes not for one age alone. The Puritan Spirit is perennial.

On the seventeenth of June, hardly more than a year ago, as I sat in Boston for hour after hour and saw mile after mile of that great procession go by, it seemed that in the whole-hearted demonstrations of that day there lay a deep significance; a significance which no other day of the year and no other place in the Union could have given. For here, here in this very city through whose streets was sweeping that grand pageant, symbolizing for our country, not by any appointment, but from the common impulse of all, reconciliation and reunion, had originated and grown up those ideas, which, permeating Massachusetts, uniting New England in one, leavening the whole North, at last gathered irresistible force, and swept from the face of our broad land that most gigantic shame.

We in these latter days saw with our eyes and heard with our ears what was the grandest outpouring of the Puritan Spirit the world has ever known. The spectacle was sublime, and one which stands alone in the world's history.

Our war was not for war's sake. It was not for conquest or any national aggrandizement: to such a contest there may attach a national feeling which can perhaps be called patriotism, though of the least noble kind. Nor was it even a heroic struggle for self-defence: in such a war we should have stood by the side of many a

brave and noble people that has given or perilled its all for national existence. Our war does stand alone. For never before did a great people thus rise like one man, for a principle; never before did half a million men rush to arms, for an idea.

Then in truth something new under the sun was added to the world's experience. Europe might well gaze and learn.

John Stuart Mill, in his *Political Economy*, speaking of America, had said that a state of society was certainly not to be admired which made of one half a nation dollar hunters and of the other half breeders of dollar hunters. A more withering blasting judgment, upon a people not wholly devoid of sensibility, could hardly have been uttered. But John Stuart Mill did gaze and learn; and what was the result? In a new edition of his book, that man who always said what he meant and meant what he said withdrew those bitter scornful words, and said America had proved herself capable of higher things.

It might indeed have seemed to a foreigner, during those dreary years which most of you remember so well, that the Puritan Spirit was dead. To many here at home it must have seemed so. But at last the uprising did come; and

“The nation, on whose fate the whole world hung,
Faced her inevitable problem then;
The dreaded problem, shunned while she was young:
And in that hour she found her sons were men:
They died; but in their death we all breathe free again.”

To the almost passionate attachment which the true Bostonian has for his city there is a basis which is firm and enduring. There is nothing superficial about it. No mere clinging to locality, no mere liking for the town we chance to have always known, could rouse and keep alive the feelings we hold for our city.

Boston has always been the mark for a sort of raillery from the rest of the country; and I think we should all be sorry if it should ever cease to be so; for beneath the sportive thrust there is a tribute paid, and a tribute which is seldom wholly concealed.

And by no means is the real Boston confined to the city limits. It takes us all in. These country towns which formed part of the Massachusetts colony can no more be disconnected from Boston than can the city suburbs. They all form part of an organic whole, throughout which the circulation never ceases; Boston constantly taking in and Boston as constantly giving out.

Here has always been for the continent the centre and the source of the Puritan Spirit; and the fact has been always felt, and always recognized, though sometimes silently.

On the afternoon of that sixteenth of June, when the city and the hills around lay in all their fresh summer loveliness, two Confederate officers were walking the streets. They had never been here before. One of them said to the other, "If we had known what sort of a city Boston was, we could have told we could not conquer." That man had seen more than streets,

bricks, trees, hills. He had seen beneath the surface. The Puritan Spirit is among us.

The Puritan Spirit is slow. Like all great and noble fruit, it matures gradually. But when the Spirit moves, the result is assured. It may be long in coming, but come it will.

For how many long and weary years, from King William to the Revolution, did our forefathers struggle with their foes from the north. How often came bitter disappointment in the efforts to rid themselves of their ancient enemy. But when once the issue was fairly marked between a state planted as ours had been and a colony reared on such foundations as those of Canada, the result was as well settled as it was on the day when the children's children attained the object for which New England had toiled and hoped so long.

When once the issue was fairly marked between America and Great Britain, the result, as far as this part of the country was concerned, was decided. John Adams wrote, at the outbreak of the Revolution, "New England alone can carry on this war for years." And she could have, and would have. Had France refused to take our part; had the central and southern states withdrawn from the unequal contest; New England would not have yielded. The concentrated power of the British Empire might have crushed her, but it could not have subdued her.

When once the issue was fairly marked fifteen years ago between North and South, the result could have

been equally well foreseen. We often speak of Gettysburg as the decisive battle of the war; as if then and there the question of ultimate victory was settled. But what if that last desperate struggle on the slope of Cemetery Hill had not broken the rebel line? Merely this. Some other place than southern Pennsylvania would have witnessed the turning of the tide. New England would no more have yielded then than she would have a hundred years ago.

So it will always be. Whenever there shall be a contest in which one side is actuated by the spirit of the Puritans, the end cannot be doubtful.

Many look forward with dread to a possible struggle in the future with influences which have their origin and their head abroad. Perhaps we are not likely to be forced to use any weapons therein but those of peace; but whatever comes, there can be but one result.

This certainty has come from the very slowness with which that Spirit makes its way. Many a year of abuse must have been needed to make the Pilgrims ready to turn their faces from their homes; but when the step was taken, there was no faltering. Many a year of injustice and insolence it took to bring Massachusetts to the point of severing the ties which bound her to the mother land; but that nineteenth of April saw her separated forever. Many a year of what our Emerson has called plantation manners had to pass, before patient New England was bullied into a sense of her duty and a sense of her power; but the firing on Sumter was the beginning of the end.

Through this slowness of action and power of endurance, the Puritan Spirit can accomplish what would otherwise be impossible.

If the conditions of the Battle of Bunker Hill had been different by merely a supply of ammunition on the American side, there is every reason to suppose that the British would have been, not only defeated, but utterly routed. It would have been a defeat perhaps without a parallel in the annals of British warfare. But if the Americans had had their powder, and had broken the British power in America then and there, it would have been impossible to attain the grand results which the Revolution did attain. Those subsequent years of mutual suffering and sacrifice were all needed to bring the disjointed fragments which then made up America into relations close enough to make nationality possible.

If the Battle of Bull Run, instead of opening up as it did our protracted war, had crushed the Rebellion in its youth, the great work of the War would have been but half done ; and the questions that are now laid away forever would have remained, more involved and perplexing than ever, for us and for our children. The North had to be taught by those years of trial the full extent and significance of the contest she was engaged in ; and the knowledge could not have come to her in a month or a year.

In spite of the seemingly great length of time it took for this last and greatest work of the Spirit, when we come to measure its gigantic effects we can only wonder

that the time required was so short. When we, who are young now, try to put ourselves into the modes of thought and feeling of even thirty-five or forty years ago, we find ourselves almost in a new world, so different does it all seem. We have indeed lived along fast in these years.

The working of the Spirit seems like the growth of an Agave, a century plant; which for slow years is steadily storing up power; laying away provision for future exertion; and when the time for fruiting comes, pours it all forth with marvellously vigorous and rapid effect.

| The Puritan Spirit is long-suffering.

| The Puritan Spirit is unmindful of self. To ancient Athens we are rightly pointed for an example in past times of a thoroughly patriotic commonwealth. But how the charm of contemplating her history is marred, when we come to read that after the Battle of Salamis they took a vote to decide who deserved greatest honor for the part taken in the salvation of the state, and every Athenian commander proceeded to vote for himself.

And this is not the worst. The patriotism of a Greek commonly lasted only so long as his own ambitions could be gratified. When his selfish aims were crossed, he seems to have had no scruples about allying himself with the hordes of Asia and turning his arms against his native land. The worst enemy Greece had always to face was treachery at home. If Benedict Arnold had been an Athenian, he could not have held the solitary distinction he does with us: he would have had abun-

dant companionship. If we turn from Greece to Rome, while we find fewer who are ready to lead foreigners against their country, mark well how often the dying speech of the Roman patriot bids his survivors reflect how hard it will be to get along without him. The Puritan Spirit looks beyond.

The Puritan Spirit would leave no sting behind. Even when, as in our last war, it has had to crush what opposes it, it does it in no rancorous way; and those who were sternest in the resolve to carry through the contest uncompromisingly to the end are the very ones that now stand first and foremost in the endeavor to put aside all feelings of hostility and bring about lasting good-will.

But the work once accomplished is work that must endure. Nothing can reverse the decision once arrived at; and in that certainty we rest. This very last winter, when some Representatives at Washington seemed doing their utmost to embitter the feelings of friendship that had been so rapidly forming, why was it that the outrageous assertion that Andersonville prison had been a reasonably humane place so completely failed to awaken resentment in the North? It was because we knew well that the work of those cruel years had been done for all time. The fruits of all those sacrifices were beyond the reach of harm. That it was which made the North seem almost apathetic. And as to the one specific fact, let no Union soldier fear it will go down to posterity misrepresented. We who are men now were boys then. But

boys have eyes that can see; and we saw those men come home. When the children of '63 and '4 shall have passed three score and ten and disappeared from among our successors, then will be time enough to send forth to the world, and have it believed, that the horrors of the Southern prison pen were a myth. But it is not from the North, or not from the true North, that any taunts will come. The Puritan Spirit would leave no sting behind.

The Puritan Spirit is fair-minded. Nothing is detracted from its own grandeur when full credit is given to the members of the English Church of two hundred and fifty years ago for their virtues and their conscientiousness; to the loyalists of one hundred years ago for their worth and their fidelity; to the Southern brethren of our own day for their sincerity and their steadfastness. It is not at men that the Puritan Spirit strikes, but at the wrongs men uphold.

The Puritan Spirit, to be understood, must be looked at with the eye of sympathy. Its nobility does not lie on the surface; and distorted views of it are easy enough to take. Such a view is the one presented in a book written by one who was once our own townsman. It passes for the book of all books for preserving to us the features of the old New England life. But that book, or at least the part of it which purports to portray our forefathers, could not have been written by that man's best self. In putting forth such a picture, he must have been conscious that he was giving not a portrait but a caricature.

The Puritan Spirit always finds its heroes. In each of the three great periods of its manifestation it has created the men who were to work its behests. It found Winthrop, Endicott, Bradford; though in those early democracies it seems invidious to mention names. It found John Adams, Samuel Adams, Hancock, Warren, Otis, Washington. It found Lincoln, Sumner, Andrew, Charles Francis Adams. Others would have been called if these had not been at hand. The Puritan Spirit is bound to find its outlet.

The Puritan Spirit is not sectional. The New England of our day sometimes receives commiseration from other parts of the country for the alleged loss of her power; for the so called decline of her influence in the national councils. The compassion is not wanted. Those who think they have seen the decay of the New England influence in the country fail to see deeply. If all New England had remained here in these six little states while a great nation from other sources grew up about her, her power would indeed have dwindled. But it is from New England's own flesh and blood that this great nation has sprung. What she did by her expansion was to keep her power, not lose it.

America is spoken of as formed by the union of all nationalities of the earth. In part it is true, and in part not. For just as our noble mother tongue, containing as it does such treasures drawn from varied languages, is built on a framework thoroughly and unchangeably Anglo-Saxon, just so our nation, having received it as

has such rich contributions from all lands, still remains thoroughly and unchangeably Anglo-Saxon. Our last war settled the questions of basis. New England is America and America New England. The Puritan Spirit is American.

A true Centennial does not dwell wholly on the past. It gazes upon the past reverently and admiringly, and then turns to the present with all the past can give.

The times we are living in are sober times. Our outlook is far from bright. This very year, when national pride should justly be at its height, when of all times we should most exult in the name of American, we have been compelled to face revelations so humiliating as to bring for the time, almost a willingness to disown our country; almost a shame at being obliged to admit we were Americans.

Amid all that has recently happened to chill the hopes of those who have faith in the possibility of a long-sustained pure government by the people and for the people, wherein lies our ground of rational confident hope? It is in our trust in the vitality, permanence, and power, of the Puritan Spirit. It is in our belief that the Puritan Spirit lives and will live, growing purer, nobler, and stronger. There lies the hope of our land. The future will brighten if we prove true. Revering as we do the men we have come together to honor, we must prove our sincerity by faithfulness to our own trusts. There is a part for one and all; "and that which men shall be will result from what we are."

We have no call now to offer our lives or our substance in the prosecution of a war. The whirlwind of strife is passed. But our part is no less essential than that of those who faced the tempest; and our duties are arduous too.

It may be said that in the past the Puritan Spirit has had some definite tangible object; while now all is vague. Three things at least we can strive steadily for, which shall be well defined and anything but vague.

Let us aim to bring it about that all public dealings, with nations or with individuals, whether money is concerned or not, shall be conducted, not only with exact honesty, but with such scrupulous honor that America's name shall be above the very suspicion of reproach. Secondly, let us aim for a civil service as pure as it was under the last Massachusetts President; whose worthy son, I cannot forbear to say, is still among us, ready and willing to serve us well if we would only call him. Do not let a candid German book have in its power to say again that the air of America is infected by a corruption of its leading classes only to be paralleled in the most abandoned parts of Europe. Finally, let it be made impossible to say in future, as it has been said now, and truthfully, that the American Congress, supposed to represent our very selves, and which ought to do so, is one of the most disreputable legislative bodies in the world.

The path to these achievements will be anything but a pleasant one. The obloquy put upon leaders in anti-slavery times, and in all times when un-wished-for sub-

jects are persistently kept in public view, will be renewed in such forms as it can be. Even when, as we have seen within a year, one who stands in the very front rank of cultured and high-minded Americans has the insight and the courage to speak the truth plainly on these matters, he is accused from all sides of uttering jibes against his country. The Puritan Spirit is going to have abundant opportunity.

But there is no excuse for despair. If corruption and shams were never so prevalent before, neither was there ever before so earnest and resolute a demand for their removal. The undercurrent towards what is true was never so deep and strong.

These things we wish for we can have ; and it is our duty to have them. If our next Centennial witness their attainment, we shall have proved ourselves worthily descended from our noble ancestry.

Could the voice of the fathers come to us now, touching our beloved country, what would it bring ?

“ Young men, with whom her destiny now lies,
Take up the arms which we have used before :
And stern defend the heritage we hand you o'er ”





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